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S E C R E T ROME 001734

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: DPRK/SARS: ODDS AND ENDS FROM THE GOI

CLASSIFIED BY: A/DCM TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON:1.5 (B)(D)

1. (S) DURING A CATCH-UP SESSION, THE MFA DEPUTY OFFICE DIRECTOR FOR EAST ASIA, PAOLA MUNZI (STRICTLY PROTECT), REVEALED TO POLOFF SOME INTERESTING TIDBITS ABOUT THE DPRK, SARS, AND THE GOI, AS WELL AS HER FUTURE POSTING.

2. (S) ACCORDING TO MUNZI, THE DPRK HAS MADE A SERIES OF ODD REQUESTS OVER THE PAST THREE WEEKS TO THE GOI. THE FIRST, FAXED TO HER OFFICE, WAS FOR A SPECIFIC BOLOGNA-BASED TEAM OF POTATO EXPERTS TO COME TO NORTH KOREA FOR CONSULTATIONS. NOT SEEING ANY HARM, THE GOI APPROVED THE VISIT. THE SECOND REQUEST WAS FOR A COPY OF A 1933 NON-AGGRESSION TREATY BETWEEN ITALY AND VARIOUS CENTRAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. WHEN PRESSED A BIT ON THIS SHE WAS UNABLE TO ANSWER IF IT HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THEM JUST YET, OR WHICH COUNTRIES EXACTLY IT APPLIED TO, ALTHOUGH SHE SAID ARCHIVISTS WERE RESEARCHING THE REQUEST. THE GOI IS WILLING TO HELP THE NORTH KOREANS LOCATE A COPY OF THE TREATY, VIEWING IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE THE REGIME, ALTHOUGH THEY REALIZE IT IS PECULIAR AND ARE NOT SURE HOW THE DPRK INTENDS TO BENEFIT FROM POSSESSING A COPY. (COMMENT: AN EIGHTY-YEAR OLD, MUSSOLINI-ERA TREATY MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST OPTION IF THE DPRK IS ATTEMPTING TO CRAFT A MODERN NON-AGGRESSION PACT. END COMMENT)

3. (S) MUNZI WELCOMED THE RECENT U.S.-DPRK TALKS, ALTHOUGH SHE MENTIONED THERE WAS SOME DISAPPOINTMENT AMONG EU MEMBERS THAT THEY WERE NOT YET PLAYING A ROLE. HOWEVER, SHE STATED THE GOI WAS PLEASED WITH THE "MULTILATERAL" NATURE OF THE TALKS AND THE WILLINGNESS OF BOTH SIDES TO BEND SLIGHTLY.

4. (S) SHE NOTED THAT SARS WAS SIGNIFICANTLY DISRUPTING HIGH-LEVEL GOI TRIPS TO ASIA. ACCORDING TO MUNZI, PRESIDENT CIAMPI'S APRIL VISIT TO BEIJING, SUPPOSEDLY CANCELED DUE TO THE IRAQ WAR, WAS IN REALITY SHELVED DUE TO FEARS OF THE SARS VIRUS. THIS APPLIED AS WELL TO A PLANNED VISIT BY MARGHERITA BONIVER, UNDER-SECRETARY FOR ASIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AS WELL AS A WIDE-VARIETY OF OTHER TRIPS NOW LANGUISHING.

5. (C) IN THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION MS. MUNZI MENTIONED SHE HAD RECENTLY MARRIED A TIBETAN NATIONAL (KNOWN TO POLOFF) AND WAS LIKELY TO LEAVE ROME IN LATE SUMMER FOR THE NUMBER TWO POSITION IN ITALY'S NEW YORK CONSULATE, ALTHOUGH THAT HAD NOT YET BEEN CONFIRMED. HER HUSBAND, RECIPIENT OF A FORD FOUNDATION GRANT, EXPECTS TO BEGIN HIS MASTER'S DEGREE AT SIT IN VERMONT, ASSUMING HE RECEIVES A STUDENT VISA.

6. (U) PRIOR TO HER CURRENT POSITION, MUNZI WAS ON THE MFA WORKING GROUP FOR ANTARCTICA IN 2001-2002, IN THE MFA DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION BUREAU, OFFICE FOR EAST/WEST AFRICA IN 1999-2001, WAS FIRST SECRETARY AND COUNSELOR FOR COMMERCIAL AFFAIRS IN HARARE 1994-1999, AND SERVED AS FIRST VICE-CONSUL AND CONSUL IN BARCELONA 1991-1994. SHE WAS BORN MAY 26, 1963 IN ROME, AND GRADUATED WITH A DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME IN JULY OF 1985. SHE JOINED THE FOREIGN SERVICE IN 1987 AND SERVED HER INITIAL TOUR FROM 1987-1991 IN THE MFA OFFICE FOR EAST-WEST RELATIONS, THE FORMER USSR, CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE. SEMBLER

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